

Luther Burbank House, Gardens  
200 Santa Rosa Avenue  
Santa Rosa  
Sonoma County  
California

HABS No CA-2201-B

HABS  
CAL,  
49 SANRO,  
4-B-

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Western Region  
Department of the Interior  
San Francisco, California 94102

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# HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Luther Burbank Gardens

HABS No. CA-2201-B

Santa Rosa, California (Sonoma County)

Other terms are used to name the property or parts thereof. The term, Burbank Gardens, used by the City of Santa Rosa, on maps, etc. to refer to the entire site, is in general use for that purpose among the local population. The section of the site containing the park designed by Landscape Architect Leland Noel is referred to as "Luther Burbank Memorial Garden" by the City. The residence area occupied by Elizabeth Burbank following Burbank's death, and containing the Residence, Carriage House, 1889 Greenhouse and surrounding residence garden is referred to by the City as, "Luther Burbank Home and Grounds", and "Home and Museum." Burbank referred to the property as the "Experimental Gardens." (He referred to the Sebastopol property as the "Experiment Farm" and, also, "Experimental Grounds.") The property (under Burbank's ownership) began as four acres, and, after his death was reduced by his widow to two acres through the sale of lots.

Location: 200 block Santa Rosa Avenue, bounded on the north by Tupper Street, on the South by Charles Street. UTM Zone 10, UTM coordinates 525250 Easting 4254050 Northing.

Present Owner: The City of Santa Rosa

Present Use: Park & Museum

Significance: Luther Burbank purchased the property in 1884. On this site he lived 22 years and worked as a horticulturalist for 41 years. The site presently contains his residence, greenhouse, carriage house and a memorial garden in his honor. Existing plants in the garden purportedly planted by Burbank include the Cedrus Lebani, under which Burbank is buried and the Juglans Paradox developed by Burbank for its rapid growth and nut production. Many of the plants incorporated into Memorial Garden were the same, or developed from, those Burbank had a hand in. The present use as a park and museum provides pleasure to thousands of visitors annually and introduces them to Burbank and his work.

## Historical Information

### I. Physical History

#### A. Luther Burbank's purchase and preparation of subject property, 1884. Drawing 2 - 1884.

##### 1. Events prior to purchase

After spending the first twenty-six years of his life in his native Massachusetts, Luther Burbank left for California in October, 1875. He arrived in Santa Rosa on October 31, 1875 where he joined his brother Alfred. (Peter Dreyer, A Gardener Touched With Genius: The Life of Luther Burbank, p. 92, 98).

Santa Rosa was (and is) the county seat of Sonoma County, and is located 60 miles north of San Francisco. The primary agricultural crop in 1875 was wheat (Dreyer, p. 112).

Burbank's euphoric first impressions of the area appeared in a letter to his mother dated October 1876. He wrote that his new home was: "the chosen spot of all this earth as far as nature is concerned,...[the] marvelously fertile valley...is covered with majestic oaks placed as no human hand could arrange them for beauty." (Luther Burbank ed. by W. Hall, The Harvest of The Years, p. 32).

Burbank's mother, Olive Ross Burbank, and sister, Emma, followed him to Santa Rosa in 1877. Olive purchased four acres at Tupper and Park Streets, a few blocks east of the present site. (Dreyer, p. 111, 112).

Luther immediately rented 2.8 acres of his mother's property and started Santa Rosa Nurseries with R.W. Bell. There, then, began Burbank's long association with the neighborhood.

Burbank began as a commercial nurseryman in an area undergoing considerable agricultural change. To take advantage of the changes in agriculture, and in hope of being an influence as well, he published his first nursery catalog, in 1880, listing a hundred species of seeds (Dreyer, p. 113).

The 2.8 acres which Burbank had rented from his mother was purchased by him in 1881. (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Deed Book 76, p. 410.)

Burbank purchased lots 42 & 43 of the George Woods Addition on Third Street, six months prior to his purchase of the subject property, (March 22, 1884). (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder Deed Book 90, p. 185). He sold them on August 22, 1887. (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Deed Book 107, p. 549) His purpose for the property is unknown, but his frequent land purchases and the role of land in the local economy suggest that they were investments.

## 2. Purchase of subject property

Seeking more space and a more central location for his work, Burbank, on September 13, 1884, purchased four acres, fronting on the 200 block of South Main Street (now Santa Rosa Avenue) from Francis M. and Catherine Dimmick (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Deed Book 93, p. 188). Including lots 1-12 and 18-29 the property was bounded on the north by Tupper Street, the south by Charles Street and the east by lots with scattered homes and outbuildings (from birdseye view drawing in 1885: Guy F. Grosse, Appendix - 1, and photo Appendix - 2, c. 1884.)

The property's condition was "neglected, run-down land...on the market for a number of years." (Dreyer, p. 116). The soil was "wet and soggy." (Henry Smith Williams, Luther Burbank His Life and Work, p. 177.) The property contained a house and barn. (Grosse perspective Appendix 2), (Burbank to G. Abrecht, May 9, 1906, The Papers of Luther Burbank, Container 2, Library of Congress, September 27, 1884, Account Books, 1884, The Papers of Luther Burbank, Container 21, Library of Congress).

The purpose of the purchase was to provide a place for Burbank's plant breeding experiments (Dreyer, p. 116).

Despite its run-down condition, the subject property was but four blocks south of Santa Rosa's commercial, county and city government center and on the main thoroughfare linking Santa Rosa with Petaluma and San Francisco to the south. The centrality of the location was later confirmed when it became part of Highway 101, a north-south route through the western coast states.

Santa Rosa Creek and Matanzas Creek merged one block north of the property and east of Main Street. A centrally located iron bridge carried South Main Street over the creek, a block north of Burbank's property. This bridge provided Burbank with ready identification and he became known as "the nurseryman south of the iron bridge."

Neighboring Properties, as indicated in Appendix 1 & 2, were developed as small farms with residences and outbuildings. Parcels appear to be 2 to 8 acres. An exception was the 8.75 Julliard property across South Main Street from the subject property. It appears in Appendix 1 and 2 to have contained the largest home in the neighborhood, a smaller home, outbuildings, an orchard, and ornamental and street trees.

3. Burbank's preparation of property in 1884 for his residence and Experimental Gardens

The earliest recorded evidence of preparation appears on a ledger sheet in which Burbank listed "Moving house and barn, painting, changing city water pipes, carpentry." (September 27, 1884, Account Books, The Papers of Luther Burbank, Container 21, Library of Congress).

Soil improvement was provided by "eighteen hundred loads of manure." (Dreyer, p. 116)

Poor drainage had made the site unproductive, and Burbank constructed a drainage system, (Williams, p. 177). Burbank's drainage system was described by Williams as comprised of "a main line of four inch tiles down the center of the tract with laterals of two inch tiles joining it at right angles at intervals of forty feet. The...main pipe carries it to a small stream nearby. The

slope of the pipes is one foot in forty feet."  
(Williams, p. 178)

The appearance of the property after Burbank's preparation suggested by the Grosse perspective is planting to row crops, and, a perimeter fence appears for the first time in photo Appendix - 2. Its picket sytle is depicted in photo Appendix -3, and other photographs.

Burbank's mother and sister moved from the mother's home with Burbank. Emma Burbank Beeson, The Early Life and Letters of Luther Burbank, p. 118.)

4. Burbank's increasing interest in full time plant breeding and departure from the sale or ordinary nursery materials, and, purchase of two other properties known to be associated with plant breeding and nursery work, 1885.

The remainder of his mother's property at Tupper and Park Streets was purchased by Burbank on June 18, 1885 (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Deed Book 95, p. 547).

Three years later, on April 19, 1888, after enjoying enough financial success to permit full time horticultural experimentation, Burbank sold the land purchsaed three years earlier from his mother, and his share in Santa Rosa Nurseries to partner R.W. Bell. It became Bell Nurseries (Dreyer, p. 123) Burbank agreed to "Refrain from carrying on the business of a nurseryman as to any of the common, standard varieties of plants and trees now sold by other nurserymen in the State of California, for the term of five years." (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Deed Book 113, p. 3)

The ten-acre Experimental Farm Grounds, (So named by Burbank), in Sebastopol was purchased on December 28, 1885. (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Deed Book 98, p. 622) The property was located on Bodega Road, one mile west of the Center of Sebastopol and about seven miles west of Santa Rosa. The current address of the property is 7777 Bodega Avenue, and, it is in the

Sebastopol city limits. It had been named Gold Ridge Farm and Burbank used that name also.

This purchase gave Burbank space to conduct large scale experiments. Trees for experimentation were planted in beds. Such plantings of trees do not appear in any photos taken of the Santa Rosa property. (Richard and Gertrude Keil, taped interview, 1977.)

Burbank added to the Sebastopol farm twice by purchasing five adjacent acres on February 8, 1904 (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Deed Book 219, p. 156) and slightly more than three acres on March 17, 1906, (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Deed Book 222, p. 286). This brought the total acreage of the Sebastopol property to 18.46 acres.

B. Site development during the period of Burbank's residency. 1884-1906.

1. Plantings in Experimental Garden .

The earliest appearance is difficult to document. A few early photos of the property are undated and show only the residence and its immediate garden (Appendix -4, thought to be the oldest photo of the home). In the background of the photo on the right side, there is a glimpse of the area which was devoted to plant experiments.

Photographs of the Gardens taken during the first decade of the present century show row crops, and, in one case, a field of "hay stacks" in the south east part of the property, (Appendix -5, -6, -7).

Burbank's annual catalogs and the new varieties they introduced provide clues to plantings on the property. The development and introduction of new varieties associated with the property from 1894 - 1906, can give an indication of what the plantings were: The Shasta Daisy, an entirely new species of plant, was introduced in 1901 after fourteen years of breeding, (WSCHS archives); Spineless Cactus was introduced in 1907 after twelve years of development, (Burbank Catalog, 1907); Burbank's "New Creations" catalog was first published in 1894. There were thousands of requests for the

catalog which offered varieties of the following plants: lilies, clematis, roses and gladioli as well as fruits which had been developed at the Sebastopol site.

Two mature trees were depicted in the Grosse 1885 perspective. One of these was gone when the photo, Appendix -3, was taken. The other tree is seen in photos until circa 1900, and can be identified by the photos as *Populus nigra* 'Italica', (Appendix 3 & 4). Other trees had been planted at the time the photo thought to be the oldest of the home was taken, and continue to appear in subsequent photographs. Additional trees were planted as seen in the subsequent photos. Some are difficult to identify by the photos; others may be identified by their distinct character as follows: *Trachycarpus fortunei* (one), *Betula* species (one), *Dracaena* species (one).

A lawn was planted around the house, as evidenced by lawnmower in photo, (Appendix 4).

A clipped boxwood hedge borders the entry walk. It appears in photographs for many years through the 1920's. DeVries also mentioned this hedge: "His house is a little cottage...approached thru [sic] closely trimmed box borders, which remind us of old fashioned New England gardening, and is to be considered as a reminiscence of his youth." (Hugo DeVries, "Personal Impressions of Luther Burbank", no page number.)

A vine appears at the corner of the front porch in the "oldest" photo. From the photo image it is not possible to determine if it is *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* which later engulfed the facade (Appendix 8).

Fence: A fence matching the perimeter fence separated the residence front garden from the remainder of the property. It was placed from the house to the greenhouse and from the greenhouse corner to the fence along Santa Rosa Avenue, and, from the north east corner of the house to the fence along Tupper Street (Appendix 14 & 17). (From photographs it appears as though this section of fence was constructed c. 1900 or after,



and that it was removed not long afterward; probably when the perimeter fence was changed, in 1906, as it does not appear in any subsequent photos.)

Buildings added and remodeled after Burbank moved onto property. 1884-1906. Drawing #3 1926

Burbank built a sixteen and a half foot by twenty four and a half foot greenhouse in 1889 (Burbank papers, Luther Burbank House and Museum, Santa Rosa). The building is extant with an addition constructed in the 1930's. HABS drawings were completed in 1981.

A small building appears north-east of the house in photo, Appendix 4. It does not appear in later photos.

The barn which was moved when Burbank prepared the property was, as depicted in the oldest photographs and the Grosse perspective, small and in the same position as a later barn. The later barn was discussed by Emma: "a barn had been built, not alone for the comfort of Black Belle, but for the storing of material used in the packing and shipping of trees and plants. A greenhouse had also been found to be required." (Beeson, p. 147.) The barn, later called the "Carriage House" is recorded in HABS Drawings.

The above buildings, were mentioned in an article by Hugo DeVries published in 1906. DeVries had visited with Burbank in July, 1904. He wrote: "Contiguous to the house are some greenhouses and sheds and other necessary buildings for the work of the farm." (DeVries, no page number.)

3. Neighborhood 1884 - 1906

During this period the character of the neighborhood surrounding Burbank's property changed from rural residential to urban residential.

Streets continued to be dirt surface but in 1901 both Tupper Street and an adjoining sidewalk were graded and gravelled. (Santa Rosa City Council, Minutes, April 3, 1901). Street trees were growing on Santa Rosa Avenue. They appear to be at least 30 feet tall in the early 1900's (Appendix 9 & 10).

- C. Burbank's move to a new residence across Tupper Street in 1906 while continuing work on Gardens site until his death in 1926.

1. New home on Tupper Street 1906

Burbank moved in December, 1906 into a new home which he had built on lots one and two of the Riverside Addition across Tupper Street. Burbank's mother moved into the house with him. (His sister, Emma, who had lived in the house in the Gardens between 1885 and sometime in the 1890's, had married George Beeson and moved to Healdsburg.) Nine months prior to Burbank's move to his new home, the severe earthquake of April 18, 1906, which caused extensive damage to Santa Rosa and San Francisco had little effect on the site. Burbank related: "The house...lost its three chimneys, but the two buildings which I built, the green house and barn-packing shed were not injured...not even a pane of glass broken or a tender plant injured." (Burbank to Abrecht May 9, 1906, The Papers of Luther Burbank, Container 2, Library of Congress).

2. After Burbank moved into his new home, the old house was used in a number of ways, including: the storage of seeds (Beeson. p. 118) and for "[John Beatty] turning out pages of manuscripts in the old Burbank Cottage," (Kraft and Kraft Luther Burbank ...p. 180), and, for some of the work of The Burbank Company, a company developed by a separate entity for the purpose of marketing Burbank plants.

3. In 1909 Burbank's mother died and in 1916 he married his secretary, Elizabeth Waters. This was his second marriage. His first marriage had ended in divorce in 1896.
4. Development of the Experiment Gardens 1906 - 1926.  
Drawing #3-1926

There exists a number of layout plans of small sections of the Gardens, drawn freehand by Burbank. These identify small sections of the Garden and identify the planting and its relationship to adjoining plantings (Appendix 39). Unfortunately, no plan has been found of the entire site, therefore, knowledge of exact bed arrangements is limited to photographs and guesswork.

Plant beds were both at-grade and raised. At-grade beds were edged in wood borders. Raised beds had wood retaining walls which appear to have been about 12" high (Appendix 7 & 10).

Photographs in Williams 1915 book show at-grade beds of flowering plants and raised beds of both seedlings and mature plants. Williams published a photo of raised beds planted in perfectly straight rows of seedlings with the note: "The neat, trim appearance of the beds... is thoroughly characteristic of Burbank's work." (Appendix 15).

Cold frames were located to the south of the greenhouse and barn (Appendix 7 & 14). Paths were of soil (photos of the Garden).

Photos depict a variety of-and-changing plantings of one type per bed. During this period plantings of spineless cactus consumed progressively larger areas of the Gardens (Appendix 12 & 13).

Catalogs were published by Burbank for Spineless Cactus (Opuntia Catalogs) separately from the rest of the plant offerings. The catalogs include testimonials in praise of the plant as animal fodder in arid regions.

Trees were planted along the rear fence. No other trees appear in experiment plantings. (Appendix 10 & 11).

Irrigation appears well established in the panoramas, (Appendix 10 & 11). The irrigation system was described by Williams (p. 181, 182); Burbank "recommends...one inch galvanized pipes with nozzles placed along the sides from twelve to twenty feet apart. The pipes, mounted on stakes at convenient height, are connected with the water supply by ordinary rubber hose. [It] will water a space evenly to a distance of from twenty-five to fifty feet on either side. The pipes may also be placed on temporary stakes or movable stands." Photographs from the period show a close-up view of hose connected to relocatable pipe on stakes and both wood stakes for relocatable pipe and pipe supported by tripods of pipe. Another arrangement shows pipe on permanent wood stakes (Williams, p. 181, W. Hall, p. 240, Appendix 16, Appendix 17).

Growing public interest in Burbank's work affected the Gardens during the last twenty years of Burbank's life. Burbank was hybridizing plants during the age of the popularization of science in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Articles about his work appeared in numerous scientific and popular journals and magazines. Burbank became a popular hero - locally, and nationally. Plagued by curious onlookers, Burbank posted a sign at the north entrance to the grounds which read: "Private Gardens - positively no visitors allowed". His catalogs began to point out regularly that "Over six thousand visitors were received in the year 1904. All the important experimental work was delayed beyond recall, grounds overrun with crowds from daylight to ten...no rest..."

During this period, a solid wood barrier fence was attached to a small portion (12' to 15') of the north perimeter fence. It was adjacent to a bed of Spineless Cactus which was within reach of the sidewalk. This barrier fence shows in several photographs. The earliest dated photo in which it appears is a 1903 photo, (Appendix 18). One would conclude that there were overzealous passersby.

As reported by Howard in 1915, "Crowds could be seen along the fences, watching him at work." (Howard, p. 315) and, Williams related that "The experiment gardens at Santa Rosa and Sebastopol are the object of admiring attention to hundreds of visitors throughout the season..." (Williams, p. 183).

In 1909 an information bureau was opened "to handle the ever increasing volume of inquiries from the public." (Dreyer, p. 231).

Some of the attention to Burbank may be traced to Santa Rosa's growing use of the home and gardens as a means to boosting the community. A common phrase on souvenir materials, for example, was "Home of Luther Burbank" (Appendix 24).

In an effort to capitalize on Burbank's fame and popularity, individuals devised various schemes with which Burbank's name could be associated. When these failed, the failure was used by some to discredit Burbank. These schemes deepened the controversy over his theories and productions.

Residence Garden: The only trees on the property during this period were those along the rear fence and around the old house. Among those which can be identified from photos are *Cedrus Libanii*, *Trachycarpus fortunei*, *Betula* species, *Phoenix canariensis*, *Araucaria araucana*, *Dracaena* species, (Appendix 8, 29, and 30), *Ulmus* hybrid, (Appendix 31). Williams reported that the *Ulmus* (Elm) is the size of a 50 year old Elm 15 years after planting. The *populus* disappeared from photos of the 1890's.

Other plants: The hedge along the front entrance walk and the lawn remained. *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* continued on the house.

##### 5. Structures added to the property 1906 - 1926

A lath house, was attached to the south side of the barn-packing shed, painted a light color (Appendix 19 & 20). There are no specific dates of its construction or destruction.

A lean-to type shed with a false front was built on the east side of the barn (Appendix 21 & 22). This shed may have been the "woodshed" approved for construction by the City Council in 1907 (City of Santa Rosa, Minutes, September 24, 1907. After the earthquake the City Council issued all building permits).

The perimeter fence was changed in 1906 or 7, and that fence is extant. A photo which can be dated 1906 (or soon after) shows the old fence, (Appendix 23). 1907 and all subsequent photos depict the new fence. This change in the fence which probably accompanied construction of the new house, has helped date undated photos.

A building, commonly referred to as "the corner office", but a post card photo also refers to it as "the editorial room", (Appendix 24 & 25) was located at a 45 degree angle to the corner of Tupper Street and Santa Rosa Avenue. Thus the public entrance faced the sidewalk corner. It was 14' x 22' and of stucco exterior with imitation tile roofing. (Its architectural style resembled Santa Rosa's 1909 main post office designed by James Knox Taylor, and currently under restoration, 1984). In 1927, Burbank's widow, Elizabeth, had the structure moved approximately 180 feet east along Tupper Street where it was set back from the sidewalk, (Appendix 26). This arrangement forms, today, the Tupper Street entrance to the Memorial Gardens. Mrs. Burbank gave the building, in 1928, to Henry Ford. It was moved to the Ford Museum at Dearborn, Michigan where it remains in an altered state (Appendix 27).

Although the precise date of construction is unknown, the office appears to have been built in 1913. An article in The Sonoma Index - Tribune on October 19, 1928, p. 1, reported that the office in which "for 15 years the plant master received his callers, handled orders of his seed business and did much of his writing is to be sent to Dearborn."

A rose trellis appears in a photo from Burbank's time (Appendix 28a). It appears to be the same trellis depicted in a 1956 photo taken by Lee Noel, (Appendix 28b).

#### 6. Neighborhood

The neighborhood changed to homes on city lots, and to having an urban, rather than rural, character.

Street trees continued to appear in photographs of the Santa Rosa Avenue side of the Gardens. The street name changed in 1907 from South Main Street to Santa Rosa Avenue (Council minutes, February 8, 1907 and September 4, 1907).

The neighborhood development continued in 1907 as arc lights were added at the following intersections: Tupper and Brown (Charles Street penciled in beside this entry), South Main and Wheeler, Tupper and E, (Council Minutes, February 8, 1907).

The following year a five foot sidewalk was placed on the north side of Tupper Street from Santa Rosa Avenue to E Street, (Council Minutes, March 3, 1908).

The Santa Rosa Avenue bridge approach, adjacent to Burbank's new residence property, was improved 1908. Burbank agreed to "lay his walk and also pay 1/2 the expense of the change." (City of Santa Rosa, City Council Minutes, June 11, 1908).

Dates of the changes from dirt to pavement on these streets do not show up in City records.

An apartment building was built c. 1908 on the corner of Santa Rosa Avenue and Charles Street south, across the street from the Gardens. It's Monterey, California style can be seen in panorama, Appendix 11 -right hand side. The building is extant and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

One large parcel remained unsubdivided, however, that being the 8.75 acre homesite of Charles F.J. Julliard, located across Santa Rosa Avenue from Burbank Gardens.

- D. Luther Burbank's death and the association of the Gardens with Stark Brother's Nursery 1927 - 1934 and Santa Rosa Junior College's ownership and use of the Gardens 1935 - 1955. Drawing #4
1. Burbank died on April 10, 1926, at the age of 77. In accordance with his wishes, his remains were

to which it had any rights on lots 6 to 12 and 23 to 29, Mrs. Burbank subdivided the property and sold ten lots between 1928 and 1931 (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Deed Book 189, p. 215 and Appendix 41).

5. The appearance of the Gardens plantings during Stark Brothers association with the property is difficult to determine. No clearly dated photos or plans of the Gardens have been found. (Photos exist, however, of the structures added during the Stark period, see below.) Because Stark's interest was primarily in procuring new varieties for their Missouri nursery and its catalog, one is able to conclude that the gardens probably remained as Burbank had left them.

6. Structures during Stark period

A 6' x 9' structure referred to as the Seed house, attached to the south wall of the carriage house. It was built about 1935 (Robert Whiting, Oral Interview, January 10, 1984). It is extant and is of the architectural style of the carriage house.

A Lath house structure appears in an undated postcard photo, positioned to the south east of the carriage house (Appendix 32 & 34) the foundation appears in Drawing 4.

Elizabeth Burbank had a gas line installed to lot 23 on March 14, 1928. It's logical to surmise that it may have been for a lath house or greenhouse.

7. Neighborhood Stark Brothers Period

In 1931 Frederick A. Julliard gave to the City of Santa Rosa, the 8.75 acre homesite of his late father, on the condition that it be used solely as a park and that the Julliard house be removed. (Santa Rosa Press Democrat, Luther Burbank Souvenir Edition, May 1960, p. 25)

Landscape architect Howard Gilkey designed the park. He was assisted by landscape architect Leland Noel of Santa Rosa who was to become, in 1956, the architect for Luther Burbank Memorial Gardens.



buried under the Cedrus Lebanii in the front of the Garden's Residence.

2. Elizabeth Burbank moved into the house on the Gardens property shortly after Burbank's death.

His widow became active in the management and direction of the Gardens, (as well as the other properties).

During the three years following her move, Elizabeth Burbank remodeled the house and its garden. Her changes included extension of the second floor to the east and opening the south wall with doors and windows. HABS drawings exist for the house in its present state.

Elizabeth Burbank developed the residence garden by adding a brick patio enclosed by brick walls. This provided a separation between the house and Stark Brothers business operation. The brick work is extant. The walls are 4'-5" high on the east side from house to Carriage House, and 3'-5" high on the south and west side. This wall has ceramic tiles worked into the brick face. The driveway to the Carriage House was paved with flat stones. Elizabeth changed the reference of this building from the "barn" to "Carriage House" at this time.

3. Stark Brother's association 1927

In 1927 Mrs. Burbank granted Stark Brothers Nurseries and Orchards Company the business, name, good will and any and all seed and bulb business formerly carried on by Luther Burbank. (Burbank Papers, Luther Burbank Home and Museum, Agreement, August 24, 1927).

Stark Brothers sent horticulturalists, John Bregar and Joseph Keil, to record the plants of the Santa Rosa Gardens and on the Sebastopol Experiment Farm properties, and, to carry on the nursery business.

4. Sale of ten lots of rear portion of Gardens 1928 - 1931.

After allowing Stark Brothers to remove all plants

WPA (Works Projects Administration) labor was used in the construction of the Park (The Press Democrat, Luther Burbank Souvenir Edition, May 1960, p. 25) (Pauline Goddard, "The Impact of the Works Project Administration...")

8. From Stark Brothers to Santa Rosa Junior College

Stark cancellation. On March 25, 1935 Stark Brothers ended its work on the Gardens property (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Book 383 of Official Records, p. 315).

Santa Rosa Junior College, 1935 - 1955. On April 16, 1935, Mrs. Burbank sold to the Junior College, lots 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, and portion of lots 4, 5, 6, 7, and 23 (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Deed Book 382, p. 233) (Board of Trustees of The Santa Rosa Junior College, Minutes, February 19, 1934, April 6, 1934 and May 4, 1934). She retained ownership of lots 4, 5, and 6 which contained the residence, 1890 greenhouse, carriage house and private garden. She continued her residence there until her death.

The purchase of the Gardens by the Community College was the first manifestation of public realization of the historical value of the site and the importance of its preservation for the public.

Joseph Keil joined the teaching staff of Santa Rosa Junior College. Botany students under his direction, utilized and maintained the Gardens property.

A change in layout of the gardens is evidenced in photos (Appendix 33, after 1935). The change from rectangular beds of experiments to wider paths and curved forms suggests an expectation of visitors to the grounds. No specific designer is associated with this arrangement. It was probably a project of Junior College students.

9. State Landmark registration was awarded to the property in 1935 (Registered California Landmark 234).

10. Layout of the Gardens, Santa Rosa Junior College Period

The layout of the Gardens depicted in Drawing number 4 and Appendix 33 continued to be apparent without change during this period.

11. Structures Santa Rosa Junior College Period

The lath House, south-east of the Carriage House, erected during the Stark Brothers period remained until at least 1949. The building does not appear in photographs taken by Leland Noel in 1956. It was there in 1938 when the visitor's entrance was built (J. Clarence Felciano and Teresa Greeott Felciano Interview, March 18, 1984). (Appendix 36).

A visitor's entrance was built on Santa Rosa Avenue in 1938. It contains a plaque with the information that the structure was a project of the Santa Rosa 20-30 Club. It is ten feet, six inches by eighteen feet, nineteen inches, and has an opening centered on each long side. It has a hip roof supported by brick columns. Walls are four feet, nine inches high; above the wall the space is open to the eave line. The wall on the street side is brick, walls on the remaining three sides have redwood lap siding. The structure was designed by Santa Rosa architect, J. Clarence Felciano, a member of the 20-30 Club. It can be seen, newly constructed in photo (Appendix 36). The brick wall at the front represents a change from the original which was wood matching the other three sides. (Felciano interview).

A greenhouse was purchased by the Junior College and moved to the property by the Junior College in 1934 (Junior College Board of Trustees minutes July 6, 1934). It was removed when the memorial garden was installed in 1959. It is seen in Noel photo, Appendix 35.

A Native Sons of the Golden West Plaque is on a low stone monument south of the Santa Rosa Avenue entrance and it states that the site has been designated as a historical landmark.

12. Neighborhood, Santa Rosa Junior College period

Following the sale, by Elizabeth Burbank of the ten Burbank Gardens lots, contemporary architecture of the 1930's appeared in the neighborhood which had, until then, retained the character established by its Victorian and California Bungalow style architecture. Now, Mediterranean influence in the form of stucco, roof tiles and arched forms was introduced, in keeping with its popularity throughout California.

In 1949, a new route for Highway 101 was opened (Press Democrat May 19, 1949, p. 1.) two blocks west of Santa Rosa Avenue. And, Santa Rosa Avenue ceased being part of that Highway. Thus, after nearly a century as the main road south from Santa Rosa, the avenue fronting the Gardens lost that place, although it continues to play an important role in the city's transporation system.

E. The City of Santa Rosa ownership of Burbank Gardens 1955 - the present. Drawing 5-1956 and 6-1984.

1. On August 15, 1955, Elizabeth Burbank transferred the ten lots which had been formerly deeded to Santa Rosa Junior College, to the City of Santa Rosa. On the same date she granted to the city, the remaining two lots on which were the house, carriage house, greenhouse and private gardens, reserving, for herself a life tenancy on the property. (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Deed Book 1373, p. 479).
2. The condition of the Gardens section of the property was characterized as "neglected" by Landscape Architect Leland Noel. (Leland Noel interview Jan. 10, 1984 and Noel photos 1956.) Mature trees appear in contemporary Noel photos and Mrs. Burbank told Noel that she planted most of these (Appendix 37 & 38)
3. City action established a Burbank Commission - E. J. Koford, Chair, Elizabeth Burbank, Bernard Plover and I. Gregg Williams- "to work out a plan for the rehabilitation of the Gardens." (Santa Rosa Press Democrat, August 17, 1955, p. 1). Williams told researchers that the Commission

"supervised operations", recognized anniversaries and worked with a "landscape gardener" for about two years." (I. Gregg Williams. Telephone Conversation with Daniel Markwyn, May 2, 1984.)

4. Memorial Garden

Funding. After failing to attract Federal funds to rehabilitate the Gardens, the City Council voted the necessary funds for the design and construction of a Memorial Garden.

Landscape Architect. Leland Noel was named by the City to prepare a design for the Gardens. Noel related that his design was influenced by Mrs. Burbank's statement that a "memorial to Burbank would be done in plants, wood, stone and water," and that he selected plants which were the same, or developed from, those Burbank had an interest in, as reported by the University of California in their bulletin, 691 Luther Burbank's Plant Contributions, by W.L. Howard published in 1945. While seeking inspiration one day for the design, Noel cut open a ceanothus seed while whittling, and there he saw the pattern which he adapted to the memorial garden design. He notes, also, that he did not plan for street trees because they would be in visual competition with the Cedrus Lebani on the grounds. (Noel Interview.)

Construction of Noel's plan was completed in 1959. General rehabilitation of the property included construction of a concrete footing for the perimeter fence and of a 14' x 14' tool shed near the east property line. (Santa Rosa building permit Sept. 18, 1959). The building is extant.

5. National Recognition

In 1964, the Luther Burbank House and Garden became a registered National Historic Landmark. A plaque is located in the memorial garden facing the visitor who walks into the garden on the main entrance walk. The site has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

6. Elizabeth Burbank's Death

Elizabeth Burbank continued to live on the site until her death on June 19, 1977, at the age of 89. Her remains were buried under the Cedrus Lebanii with those of Burbank and of Joseph Shaw, Burbank's close friend and physician. (Santa Rosa Press Democrat, June 20, 1977, p. 1).

7. Luther Burbank Property Advisory Committee

In November 1977, the City Council formed the Luther Burbank Property Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee prepared a plan for the "Home and Grounds," and it was approved by the City Council in April 1978.

The advisory committee's proposal to form a museum complex of the house, greenhouse, carriage house and garden has been partially realized. The first floor of the house was opened to docent conducted tours in 1979, along with the greenhouse and garden. A small gift shop in the Carriage House was opened in 1980. A caretaker's apartment now occupies the second floor of the Carriage House and plans for the remainder of the Carriage House are under study. Some 5000 visitors visit the museum each year. The Advisory Committee under the authority of the City continues to oversee the operations of the museum, grounds and gift shop.

8. A perennial garden has been planned and maintained by the Santa Rosa Garden Club and some the Museum of docents. (Appendix 40, and drawing #6).

A rose garden in an area which was unplanted at the time of Elizabeth's death, was designed by Advisory Committee and Santa Rosa Garden Club member, Sally Joy. It was installed by the Santa Rosa Garden Club, Eastside Rotary Club, and by Sally and Richard Joy. This garden, behind the house, is maintained by the Santa Rosa Garden Club. (Appendix 40.)

9. Plantings on the entire Gardens site are being done by the Santa Rosa Garden Club in both the Memorial Gardens and House Garden. with the approval of the Parks Department. No comprehensive plan directing present and future additions to the site exists at this time. (Sherman Boivin, Oral Interview, January 22, 1984, Chairman, Luther Burbank Property Advisory Committee).

## 10. Condition

The city is responsible for the maintenance of the Memorial Garden and that part of the House Garden which is not maintained by the Garden Club and Museum docents. Current park gardener is Donald Flowers. Maintenance and repairs to buildings is the responsibility of the City. Documents and Burbank memorabilia belonging to the Museum are maintained by the Advisory Committee.

All plants, excepting the Paradox Walnut east of the Carriage House and the Cedrus Lebanii west of the house are in good condition. The Paradox Walnut has had much of its wood removed and the wounds sealed. The remaining branches show stress. The Cedrus Lebanii has suffered root deterioration. In an attempt to provide a new root system to save the tree, rooted scions were grafted to the base of the tree. The grafting has failed to produce results.

Buildings have been kept in good repair. A drainage problem around the Seed House, caused by its low grade, has brought a proposal by the Parks Department to raise the building. City approval is expected.

## 11. Neighborhood

Tupper Street was closed in 1965 to Santa Rosa Avenue and a cul-de-sac was formed at its end adjacent to the north entrance to Luther Burbank Gardens. A park, Sonoma Avenue Park, was developed around the cul-de-sac and along Sonoma Avenue to Hendley Street, two blocks east.

Burbank's Tupper Street Residence was demolished in preparation for this development.

Santa Rosa's new City Hall was built in 1969 to the north, across Tupper Street and Sonoma Avenue.

A Neighborhood Committee was established to participate, with the Santa Rosa Planning Department, in the development of a detailed analysis of the neighborhood. The City of Santa

Rosa had entered into the HUD 701 Neighborhood Studies Program "because [of] a concern for land use trends taking place within selected mature neighborhoods and a fear that incrementally the goals of the General Plan, especially the Housing Element, were being eroded." The committee began meeting on January 30, 1974, and soon after established a separate permanent Forum "to meet regularly after the 701 study has been completed: to monitor the neighborhood's problems" (City of Santa Rosa Planning Department, Burbank Gardens Neighborhood Study p. 1).

Today, the Burbank Gardens, together with Sonoma Avenue Park, and the City Hall complex to the north, and Julliard Park to the west, form a large public area of landscaping, buildings and gathering places. The Gardens exhibit historical evidence of the life and work of Luther Burbank and of his widow, Elizabeth, who survived him by 51 years. The area remains near the central downtown area of Santa Rosa, a city of 80,000 residents, and is closely linked to the center of the town as it was in Burbank's time.

Note: Please see field records for copies of historic views of the gardens.



## II. Biographical Information

- A. Luther Burbank 1849 -1926. Born in Lancaster, Massachusetts. He had been conducting plant breeding experiments when he read, at the age of nineteen, Darwin's The Variations of Animals and Plants Under Domestication. It had "an immediate bearing" on his work, said Burbank. This same year he selected a sport potato from his seedlings, and propagated it. The Russet Burbank, it is the most widely grown potato in the United States. Burbank settled in California two years later. This was a time when the need for increased agricultural production and quality afforded him the market for his plant developments. The opportunity gave him recognition, fame, wealth and made him a popular hero. His plant contributions included new and improved varieties of fruits, nuts, vegetables and flowers. The Burbank plums still hold the lead in the commercial market. The Shasta Daisy, an entirely new species of plant, and rare accomplishment, is still popular. Additionally, Burbank must be credited with developing public appreciation for the usefulness and beauty of plants, as well as an inspiration to look at the world of nature from the point of view of science rather than mystery.
- B. Elizabeth Waters Burbank (1888-1977). Born in Hastings, Michigan. From 1914 was Burbank's private secretary. Had moved to Santa Rosa with a child a few years old. Married Burbank December 21, 1916. She was twenty-eight, he sixty-seven. After his death in 1926 she was invited to travel and lecture in the United States and Europe. She lived on the Santa Rosa Gardens property until her death, without marrying again.
- C. Leland Noel (Born 1906). Birthplace England. Educated at Dartington Hall. Came to Santa Rosa in 1937 and began practice of Landscape Architecture. Retired, now, his experience includes 3000 private projects as well as the Sonoma County Administration Center complex, Howarth Park and other local parks. Friend of Elizabeth Burbank.

## PURCHASES AND SALES OF OTHER PROPERTIES THROUGH 1905

A 20 acre parcel was purchased on August 27, 1887 by Burbank in Llano de Santa Rosa, West of Old Telegraph Road, from Santa Rosa to Petaluma. Diane Hall could not find any record of its sale, nor did it appear in Burbank's will (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Deed Book 107, p. 371 and D. Hall p. 5).

Across from the Experimental Gardens on Tupper Street, Burbank purchased 5.13 acres on October 6, 1887 (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Deed Book 109, p. 247). This property backed on Matanzas Creek (Hall, p. 5). It was subdivided and mapped as the Riverside Addition in 1904. Burbank sold five lots and a portion of another in 1904 and repurchased them the next year (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Deed Book 219, p. 53). Lots ten through twenty were sold in the early 1900's. Lots one through nine were part of the estate at his death in 1926. (D. Hall, p. 6). This property was the location of his last residence built in 1906. (D. Hall, p. 6).

Burbank purchased a strip of property adjacent to the Tupper and Park Street nursery business in 1888 (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Deed Book 115, p. 141). This became part of the Arboreta Addition, a ten lot subdivision mapped in January 1904.

Two small purchases, December 15, 1903 (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Deed Book 209, p. 531) appear to have been made to incorporate into the Arboreta Addition. All ten lots were sold by December 1905 (D. Hall, p. 6).

## PURCHASES AND SALES OF OTHER PROPERTIES 1906-1926

Burbank purchased a lot across Santa Rosa Avenue from the Tupper Street home (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Deed Book 245, p. 186). It remained in his estate until 1930. Burbank's use of the property is unknown, (D. Hall, p. 7).

Seventeen acres in West Roseland tract were purchased by Burbank on July 13, 1912 (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Deed Book 296, p. 284). All except 4.7 acres were sold before his death, (D. Hall. p. 8).

Five, 5 acre lots in the McDonald Ranch Subdivision were purchased on October 11, 1912 (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Deed Book 304, p. 234). One lot was sold by Burbank, one was deeded to Wilbur Hall by his widow, and the other three sold in 1945 (D. Hall, p. 8).

He made no more purchases, but sold: one lot in 1913, two lots in 1919 and eight parcels in 1922 & 23 (D. Hall, p. 8).

Elizabeth Burbank purchased lot 43 of La Rosa Place on January 24, 1924. She sold it in 1927 (Sonoma County Office of the Recorder, Official Records 68, p. 141, and D. Hall. p. 8).

### III. SOURCES CONSULTED

- Beeson, Emma Burbank; The Early Life and Letters of Luther Burbank, Harr and Wagner. San Francisco, 1927.
- Burbank, Luther; Partner of Nature, ed. Wilbur Hall, New York: D. Appleton - Century Company, 1939.
- Burbank, Luther; The Harvest of The Years, ed. Wilbur Hall. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1927.
- Boivin Sherman; Interview, Santa Rosa, January 23, 1984. Current Chair of Luther Burbank Property Advisory Committee, he has held the position from the beginning.
- Carson, Charles F.; The Life of Luther Burbank. The Press Democrat Publishing Co. and Chalres Carson. Santa Rosa, 1949.
- The Edison Institute, Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Museum, Dearborn, Michigan. This collection includes records, letters, photographs concerning the museum's procurement of the stucco office and its relocation to the museum.
- DeVreis, Hugo; "Personal Impressions of Luther Burbank," The Independent (May 17, 1906). No page numbers.
- Dreyer, Peter. A Gardener Touched with Genius: The Life of Luther Burbank. New York: Coward, McCann & Georgehegan, Inc., 1975. This is the most current book on Burbank. Valuable as an account of Burbank's life in context with science history.
- Goddard, Pauline. "The Impact of the Works Projects Administration (WPA) in Sonoma County" MA Thesis. Sonoma State University, 1976.
- Grosse, Guy F. Birdseye view drawing of Santa Rosa Valley 1885. Elliott & Co., Oakland, California 1885.
- There are at least two inaccuracies in identification. Tupper Street has no street name and what is really Charles Street is incorrectly identified as Tupper. And, Matanzas Creek is identified as Matanzas Street. This would lead one to look upon its information with reservation. However, for lack of other recorded or graphic data, it has been used in research.
- Hall, Diane N. "Luther Burbank's Landholdings in Sonoma County, California: 1881-1926." Paper, Sonoma State

University, Cotati, California. 1983 (Typewritten.)

Illustrated Atlas of Sonoma County. Santa Rosa: Reynolds and Proctor, 1897. Township and city maps, land ownership list and brief local history.

Joy, Sally. Interview, Santa Rosa, December 2, 1983. Member of Santa Rosa Garden Club whose members donate maintenance time for civic beautification. Member Luther Burbank Property Advisory Committee.

Keil, Richard & Gertrude. Taped interview, July 27, 1977. Richard is the son, Gertrude, the widow of Joseph Keil. The Keils lived in the cottage on the Experiment Grounds in Sebastopol while working on the site for Stark Brothers Nursery, 1930-34.

Kraft, Ken and Kraft, Pat. Luther Burbank: The Wizard and the Man. The Meredith Press, New York, 1967.

Library of Congress, Manuscript Division. The Papers of Luther Burbank.

Noel, Leland. Interview, January 10, 1984. Landscape Architect for Luther Burbank Memorial Gardens.

Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1908. Available on microfilm, Sonoma County Library, Santa Rosa.

Santa Rosa, California. Luther Burbank Museum. Burbank Memorabilia: A partially catalogued collection which includes photographs, correspondence, family papers, nursery plans, nursery catalogs, financial papers and scrap-books. Some of the material is available on microfilm at the Santa Rosa Branch of the Sonoma County Library.

City of Santa Rosa Planning Department. Burbank Gardens Neighborhood Study. Santa Rosa, California, 1974.

City of Santa Rosa Public Works Department. Building Department. Records of later projects affecting Burbank Gardens.

Sonoma County Assessor's Office, 585 Fiscal Drive, Santa Rosa, California 95401. Information regarding ownership, lot size, tax assessment in connection with structures on the property and estimated date of construction when

researching property prior to taxation.

Williams, Henry Smith. Luther Burbank: His Life and Work. New York: Hearsts International Library Co., 1915. Williams had personal contact with Burbank in connection with his being hired by Cree Publishing Company to pull together the work of several predecessor writers into a clear concise exposition. (Dreyer 241).

Whiting, Robert. Interview, Santa Rosa, January 10, 1984. General Contractor, worked on about 10 building projects on Burbank property from 1935 to 1965. Donor, to restoration fund of a lot which was sold for the realization of \$30,000.00.

Archive Collection, Western Sonoma County Historical Society, Sebastopol, California. A collection which includes photographs and memorabilia of Burbank's property in Sebastopol and Santa Rosa Gardens.

### PROJECT INFORMATION

The Luther Burbank Gardens Historic American Building Survey Project was sponsored by the City of Santa Rosa through a grant awarded by the Sonoma County Landmark's Commission. The project was conducted from early 1983 to mid 1984.

Team: Robert Welborn, Landscape Architect; Renee Felciano, Landscape Architect; Professor Daniel Markwyn, Ph.D., California State University, Sonoma; and Diane Hall, BA Candidate, California State University, Sonoma.

Drawings were completed by Robert Welborn. Research was performed by all members of the team. The historical narrative was compiled by Renee Felciano, and written by Renee Felciano and Daniel Markwyn.

Luther Burbank Property Advisory Committee Chairman, Sherman Boivin performed as client representative for the project. Drawing #6 was partially based on plant identification provided by Bob Hornback.